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PUBLICATIONS OF THE  
GENERAL NOTES.

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A THOUGHT ON ABERRATION.

The usual demonstration of the books intended to explain the origin of what is known as aberration of light, was always obscure and unsatisfactory to me. It generally refers to a ray of light from the cosmic body, considered from a point of departure at  $x$  distance from the Earth, at the time when the observer's eye is at  $A$  in continuous right line therewith, but not reaching the eye until the latter has moved to  $B$ , owing to the Earth's motion, the line  $Bx$  then becoming the direction of the body as seen. It was not easy for me to digest this as an explanation of aberration, for, the radiance from the star proceeding in straight and continuous lines, would imply that the particular point of the retina impinged upon at any instant must necessarily form part of the straight ray coming directly from the star, for nothing could have occurred to deviate it from a direct rectilinear course, and it was only on conceiving the ray to be a rectilinear succession of minute projectiles and considering what would occur when one of the latter strikes the retina, that the cause of aberration became clear. At the instant of striking, the projectile can be conceived as being acted upon by two energies simultaneously, its linear velocity being that of light, and the point of the retina struck moving say at right angles to its course and therefore with the Earth's orbital velocity. Constructing the resultant from the parallelogram of forces represented in linear dimension by the two velocities, it becomes at once apparent that the angular departure of this resultant from the perpendicular is, in such case, the actual stellar constant of aberration. It is only in this aspect of the case that aberration seems to be truly explainable, and I well remember, as significant, an answer given me by the late Professor Newcomb, on imparting to him my difficulty in grasping the book explanations; it was short and to the point, for, said he, "Aberration is more clearly explainable by the old corpuscular theory of light than by the wave theory", but further than this no statement was forthcoming, and I never could quite see how the book explanation became any clearer under the one than the other theory.

The chief point to be accentuated at this time—tho sufficient literature is not now at hand for determining its originality—is that aberration of light, for the reasons stated, would seem to be a purely retinal phenomenon.

THOS. L. CASEY.

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*Awards to Astronomers by the French Academy of Sciences.*—Among the prizes awarded at the meeting of the French Academy of Sciences at Paris, on December 18, 1916, the following are of special interest to astronomers:

The Lalandé Prize was awarded to M. Jérôme-Eugène Coggia, who has been connected with the observatory at Marseilles for the past sixty years. The award was made for the whole of M. Goggia's work and was increased from the usual amount to one thousand francs.

The Valz Prize was awarded to M. Giovanni Boccardi, director of the new Turin observatory, for his researches on the variation of latitude and his discovery of a sensible inequality in the semi-lunar period.

The Gold Medal of the Janssen Prize was awarded to M. Charles Fabry, and a silver-gilt medal to M. Henri Buisson and to M. Henry Bourget, his collaborators at the Marseilles Observatory in determining the temperature of the Great Nebula in *Orion*, and the atomic weight of the unknown gas within the nebula whose presence is shown by spectrographic observations. A footnote states that M. Fabry's medal was really struck off in silver-gilt like the two others, but bears the name "gold-medal" and is accompanied by an award of three hundred francs.

The sum of two thousand francs from the Fonds Bonaparte was awarded to Pere Joseph Laïs, astronomer in charge of the Carte du Ciel at the Vatican Observatory, to assist him in carrying on this work.

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*Errata in Aitken's Measures of Double Stars. Publications of the Lick Observatory, Volume XII.*—This very fine series of difficult measures is remarkably free from misprints and errors of all kinds. In the course of copying the 186 pages of

quite closely printed material only the following brief list was found:

- Page 3. For H<sup>o</sup>. 506 read Hu 506.  
 15,  $\beta$ 513. For 1898.62 read 1898.92.  
 27, H338. For  $34^{\circ}.8$  read  $134^{\circ}.8$   
 36,  $\beta$ 552. The figures under "Residuals", (including the date), for 1899.72 seem to be in error.  
 45,  $\beta$ 753. 1897.15 should be 1897.12.  
 46,  $\alpha$ 150.  $0''.7$  should be  $0''.17$ .  
 67,  $\Sigma$ 1429. For 5418 read 5421.  
 75,  $\beta$ 792. The means evidently belong to the following pair,  $\beta$ 917.  
 80, S 643.  $23''.20$  should be  $23''.40$ .  
 90,  $\Sigma$ 1819. The first mean,  $257^{\circ}.3$  should be  $357^{\circ}.3$ .  
 91,  $\beta$ 1111. 1905.36 should be 1905.33.  
 93,  $\Sigma$ 1865. In the third mean,  $139^{\circ}.1$  should be  $149^{\circ}.1$ .  
 99,  $\Sigma$ 1969. In the third mean,  $0''.65$  should be  $0''.60$ .  
 107,  $\beta$ 624.  $316^{\circ}.7$  should be  $316^{\circ}.1$ .  
 111,  $\beta$ 1117. 1899.47 should be 1897.47.  
 125,  $\beta$ 1091.  $31^{\circ}.8$  should be  $29^{\circ}.8$   
 126,  $\beta$ 1274, AB.  $96''.07$  should be  $96''.10$ ; BC, 1898.61 should be 1898.63.  
 134,  $\beta$ 648. Corresponding to 1906.37,  $190^{\circ}.4$  should be  $190^{\circ}.2$ .  
 134,  $\Sigma$ 2438.  $30^{\circ}.2$  should be  $30^{\circ}.4$ .  
 141,  $\beta$ 1130.  $33^{\circ}.3$  should be  $33^{\circ}.0$ .  
 141,  $\beta$ 657.  $148^{\circ}.0$  should be  $147^{\circ}.7$ .  
 145,  $\alpha$ 400. 1899.67 should be 1899.70.  
 147,  $\beta$ 1259. The two means belong to some other pair.  
 157,  $\beta$ 836.  $181^{\circ}.0$  should be  $183^{\circ}.4$ .  
 163,  $\beta$ 1261.  $1''.47$  should be  $1''.57$ .  
 168,  $\beta$ 75. 1897.86 should be 1897.82.  
 174,  $\beta$ 1146.  $311^{\circ}.0$  should be  $313^{\circ}.6$ .  
 177,  $\beta$ 1220. 1898.89 should be 1898.84.  
 185,  $\beta$ 733, AC. 1900.68 should be 1900.66.

ERIC DOOLITTLE.

The Flower Observatory,  
 November 27, 1916.

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A *Bright Meteor*.—Mr. Mills N. Waterhouse of Saratoga, California, reports that he observed an unusually brilliant meteor at 10:20 p. m. on November 28, 1916. The meteor was very bright, probably at least of magnitude  $-5$ ; its path ran from a point in approximately five hours in right ascension and thirty degrees south declination almost directly toward *Sirius*, ending beneath  $\beta$  *Canis Majoris*.